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WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: TFHA01: CANADA CONSIDERING MEDEVACS

1. (U) Canada is in the process of establishing procedures to treat medevac patients from Haiti. A British Columbia-based NGO -- the Rick Hansen Foundation (which specializes in spinal cord injuries) -- has identified eight Haitian patients with spinal cord injuries recommended by contacts on the ground in Haiti (including at least one Canadian Forces doctor). It has offered to pay their medical expenses in Canada for ninety days. The Department of National Defence has apparently agreed to provide a medevac airlift from Haiti to the Ottawa area. Four hospitals in Ontario and one in Manitoba have tentatively agreed to provide the needed care.

2. (U) However, the government of Canada is still wrestling with a few issues:

- how to issue visas to the eight patients, most of whom presumably do not have passports now and few of whom would likely qualify for a visa ordinarily;
- how to pay for in-country Canadian travel;
- eligibility of family members to accompany, and who would cover those costs;
- who would absorb the costs of any medical treatment or rehabilitation after the 90 day period;
- how to ensure that the patients (and any family members) would return to Haiti, especially if Canada was still in its current period of halting all deportations to Haiti;
- how to deal with local perceptions of "queue jumping" in hospitals where there may be wait periods for Canadian patients with similar injuries;
- how to coordinate with the provincial health ministries, which individually administer the federally funded national health care system;
- how to determine whether alternative in-country hospital space may already be available in Haiti, as the Pan-American Health Organization has apparently suggested; and,
- which federal agency in the Canadian government should have the overall lead on this issue (most likely, the Privy Council Office).

3. (U) There will be a meeting of Deputy Ministers late afternoon on February 5 to sort through some of these issues, with hopes of achieving greater clarity soon. According to the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Canada wants to be supportive of this medevac process and intends to begin with this offer from the Rick Hansen Foundation and these eight cases, but will need some additional time given that there are no precedents in Canada for similar medevacs.

¶4. (U) Canada would welcome additional information about which other countries are currently providing or are planning to provide medevacs for Haitian patients and about the procedures that they - including the U.S. - are using regarding visas, expenses, etc.

¶5. (U) Minimize concerned.
JACOBSON